

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



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Adlington (Lancashire),
November 2023

Introduction

Janet's essay has been inspired by her regular searches for anything relating to clogs and wooden shoes on auction websites such as eBay. Her searches have helped us to assemble a large collection of clogs, pattens, wooden shoes, tools, souvenirs, documents, postcards, etc. However, in addition to interesting items we might wish to buy at a reasonable price, searches reveal clog-related listings which are for items with very inaccurate descriptions or vastly optimistic prices based on a lack of understanding about what is being offered for sale.

Vendors often find it difficult to identify the correct country of origin of the clogs or wooden shoes they trying to sell. It is not unknown for European wooden shoes such as sabots, galoches, or klompen to be described as being British clogs. Some eBay vendors cannot identify the correct continent of origin. Examples have included French sabots described as being Vietnamese, Dutch or Belgian klompen as Chinese, and Turkish nalin as Japanese.

Another typical error is the misstating of the age of clogs, British ones in particular. Many people nowadays do not realise that clogs are still made in Britain. A shabby pair of clogs might not be Victorian. It might have been made in the 1990s but the clogs have had a lot of wear and perhaps have not been repaired promptly. Vendors tend to be guided by descriptions used in listings by other vendors rather than doing any fact-checking before creating their own listing.

In some cases, I am happy to contact online auction vendors and suggest that they make changes to their listings. Some are happy to receive advice, and they do correct their listings. However, some listings are so inaccurate that I get the impression that the vendors are probably beyond help. Examples include listings for modern used clogs advertised at a price greater than a new pair would cost. Or listings created by vendors who think a date in the 1800s means 18th century.

It is difficult for people to find accurate information about clogs and wooden shoes. Articles available online vary in quality. There are good articles, though others appear equally plausible but contain speculation or inaccurate statements. It is to be hoped that Janet's essay will be of use to some vendors, or potential purchasers of clogs or wooden shoes, whether to help them identify the nature of the items, or to inspire them to do a little more research of their own.

Michael L. Jackson, Adlington (Lancashire), November 2023

Acknowledgements

This essay has been created in Google Docs and LibreOffice Writer.

The PDF version has been created using the free online tools available at <https://combinepdf.com/>

Other Guidance

To see photographs of a wide range of clogs and wooden shoes visit the Internationaal Klompen Museum's website at <https://www.klompenmuseum.nl/klompen>

See the "Further Reading" section after the essay for other titles about clogs and clog making. Some are available online as free PDFs.

Index to illustrations

Page	Description
8	Three types of stilted shoe. Front to back: paduka (India), geta (Japan), and nalin (Turkey).
8	Paduka with straight stilts. The fronts are carved into five stylized toes.
9	Nalin with stilts, inlaid with silver wire and carved mother of pearl. Note the stilts at the back, which have evolved into heels. Older nalin have identical straight stilts front and rear.
10	Nalin with identical high stilts.
10	A pair of miniature nalin with elaborate wire decoration. The rear "stilts" are very clearly just ordinary heels here.
11	A pair of very basic modern takunya nalin, without stilts, designed to be comfortable, practical and hygienic. The straps have been made from car tyres, and the decoration is burnt on.
11	Sophisticatedly simple geta.
13	East African wooden sandals. The raffia is merely part of their "packaging", keeping them together and allowing them to be hung up when they were on sale ~ it would be removed before wearing.
13	Khrawan with curved stilts, from Afghanistan or Pakistan. Very similar to Indian paduka in shape and decoration, but with straps rather than solid toe posts. This pair has ankle loops only – they have lost their instep straps, which would have been loose rather than affixed. It cannot be seen in this photo, but one of them has suffered a snapped toe piece and the wearer has improvised with plaited fabric.
14	Child's bakya dating from the 1940s or '50s. The heel scene is in low relief, but usually they are fully carved. The strap is wide and shaped, fitting the foot nearly to the toes. Nalin have a narrower, straight band.
15	Modern Greek stilted sandals similar to nalin. The soles closely resemble early medieval pattens.
16	Reproduction early medieval pattens. Some had three stilts.
16	Reproduction later medieval pattens - the soles have changed shape and lost their stilts.

Index to illustrations

Page	Description
17	Much later English patten with a ring and toe. Interestingly, the straps for the ties are of different leather from the toe, bearing a faint stamped pattern not visible in this photo, and are probably French. It is known that patten straps were imported to the UK. French clogs were frequently fitted with embossed straps, probably the customer's choice from a selection of ready made designs bought in by the sabot maker. Presumably English cloggers found them convenient for their own pattens.
17	French pattens for a child. Note the embossed straps. These have nailed on leather caulkers.
18	Antique miniature pattens with toes, and metal welts. They have no sole protection. These could be French or English, but they are one of two pairs bought in the UK.
19	Reproduction medieval patten next to a Georgian style (but later) patten with an iron patten ring. The rings could be much higher than this example, sometimes a foot or more. The two part straps with laces allowed for variations in shoes; they'd fit over anything from slippers to boots.
20	Two examples of namakshin, practical and ornamental. The stilts are carved out of the solid block, not attached as are geta teeth.
21	A selection of Spanish pile clogs, the two smaller are ornamental miniatures. The practical version was worn with very thick socks, or even stuffed with hay or wool for comfort. This pair has thick recycled tyre rubbers. Some Spanish clogs were carved in their entirety (as shown here) from a solid block, others had their stilts extended with wooden pegs.
21	Spanish clogs with stilts attached with dowels.
22	French sabots with a wide, embossed strap. These straps would have been bought by the sabot maker ready-made.
22	Typical German clog with a strap which is in effect a partial upper of padded leather. This gives more leeway to the tarsals and metatarsals than a full wooden clog, so that the clog can fit higher up the foot.
23	Belgian clogs with leather straps for security. These would not accidentally fly off the foot at awkward moments.
23	French boot sabots with very substantial leather tops and only a partial wooden upper over the toes.

Index to illustrations

Page	Description
25	A pair of women's work clogs from Lancashire, clearly showing bunions which would have been agony in solid wooden clogs, but here the leather has been stretched (either by wear or design) to accommodate them comfortably. The toes have been patched - this pattern of wear is caused by scrubbing stone floors on hands and knees - and new straps have been fitted, again in this position an area of strain. Clogs are easily repaired and very economical. The mends on this pair are not elegant, but would have kept them serviceable - maybe their owner appreciated they were easy on her bunions, so they were worth the trouble of fixing.
27	A pair of Victorian child's clogs, showing the results of extreme poverty. These will have been hand-me-downs to several children. The uppers have been slit to try to accommodate growing feet, and the irons have completely worn away. The soles are paper thin to the point of being through at the toes. Much of the damage could have been avoided by replacing the irons - but though this would have greatly extended their useful life, it cost too much.
28	Child's Scandinavian clogs from Denmark, with a full back.
28	French wartime galoches in very solid leather with a full back, and leather caulkers reinforced with hobnails - these meant business.
29	A modern pair of traditional Portuguese slip-on clogs. These have welts, and the edges of the leather have been neatly bound.
29	A pair of Welsh slipper clogs.
30	Modern Spanish Zuecos de Gallegos in undyed leather with car tyre rubbers. Very similar boot clogs are found in Portugal.
31	Stylish French boot galoches with a pronounced curve at the heel, lacquered toes and faux snakeskin. Note hidden nails.
32	Black lacquered slip-on galoches with partial wooden heel backs, embossed decoration and zig zag rubbers.
32	Plain pair of French galoches which apart from the sole shape bear a strong resemblance to their British and Spanish counterparts - these have visible nails, straighter heel backs than usual, and tins (not usually found on Spanish zuecos), though these are a slightly different shape from British tins and have a horizontal indent across them.

Index to illustrations

Page	Description
33	An unusual pair of black galoches - however, there's no confusion, as the design screams "France"!
34	A modern morris clog with battered leather and severe damage caused by ignoring a worn away iron. It may look ancient, but this is the result of hard use, carelessness and lack of polish, not antiquity. Don't assume that because clogs look shabby, they are necessarily old. Many old clogs have been looked after and are still handsome and wearable. Note the very flat, machined sole here.
36	A pair of child-sized dandy clogs, old, but unworn. One of the clasps is in effect upside down. They have identical soles and never having conformed to right and left feet, the uppers haven't differentiated - the infuriating result of which is that no matter how they are placed for photography, they always look wrong. Of course, this is not a foolproof way of dating clogs from someone else's photo, as they may genuinely have got them the wrong way round!
37	A selection of children's clogs, top to bottom Victorian to late 1990s, clearly showing the evolution in shape. It has to be admitted that the earlier clogs look elegant, but they must have squashed up the poor little soft footbones dreadfully.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



There's a lot of confusion regarding the identification and history of various types of wooden shoes, and we often see them mislabeled or with misinformation on sites such as eBay and even in museums because there is a great deal of similarity between many of them.

There are good reasons for these resemblances. For starters, we've all got the same anatomy, the same basic problems, and the same materials to work with. Bruised, wet, muddy feet? Protect them with variants on clogs and pattens made from ubiquitous wood and leather. Trial and error continually hones the design towards its optimum: it is hardly surprising that separate civilisations can end up with near identical footwear. This is not unlike convergent evolution, where totally unrelated species may grow to resemble each other closely in response to similar environmental challenges.

There's another factor, though. We are very social, and trade in goods, ideas and fashions: these can be remarkably persistent and spread a considerable distance, and, like parallel

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

evolution this time, again result in strong similarities, this time because the designs *are* actually related.

It's true that either or both of these factors can be in play here at different stages, but we need to be wary of making unfounded assumptions. Unsubstantiated (and on analysis, sometimes very silly) theories abound, and are repeated as unchallenged fact. We can have a need for exotic explanations, plus a pervasive tendency to find the answers we'd like simply because we are looking for them.

As practicalities will repeat given enough time, it's unnecessary to scrape the historical barrel to find some unlikely contact supposedly accounting for different cultures coming up with similarly constructed shoes. Decoration, however, is another kettle of fish, as it is usually a purely artistic and therefore idiosyncratic phenomenon. If you see very similar decorative styles, they are most likely related, but bear in mind, this aspect could very well have come in later in the shoes' development, when contact occurs after the base design has already evolved. The truth is, frequently we just don't know, and should admit it.

The word "clog" pertains to wood (it has a similar root to "log") and is defined as a shoe with a substantial wooden element. The sole at least must be wooden to qualify, the upper (if it has one) can be wooden, partially wooden, or wholly of other materials. A wooden heel alone does not count, and properly speaking, the currently popular plastic slip on shoes are not clogs and have only acquired the sobriquet by resembling Scandinavian clogs in shape. A patten is a type of clog, being a wooden soled sandal or overshoe lacking a substantial upper, and may have a basic sole, stilts, or a deep platform. It's held on the foot or fixed over another shoe with leather or fabric straps and sometimes a toe-piece, or in the case of paduka, a post between the big and next toes.



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About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Three types of stilted shoe. Front to back: paduka (India), geta (Japan), and nalin (Turkey).

Most of us should be reasonably familiar with the three main types of traditional patten still in use in modern times: paduka from India, geta from Japan, and nalin from Turkey (front to back in above photo), and once we get our eye in, there is no excuse for confusing these.



Paduka with straight stilts. The fronts are carved into five stylized toes.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

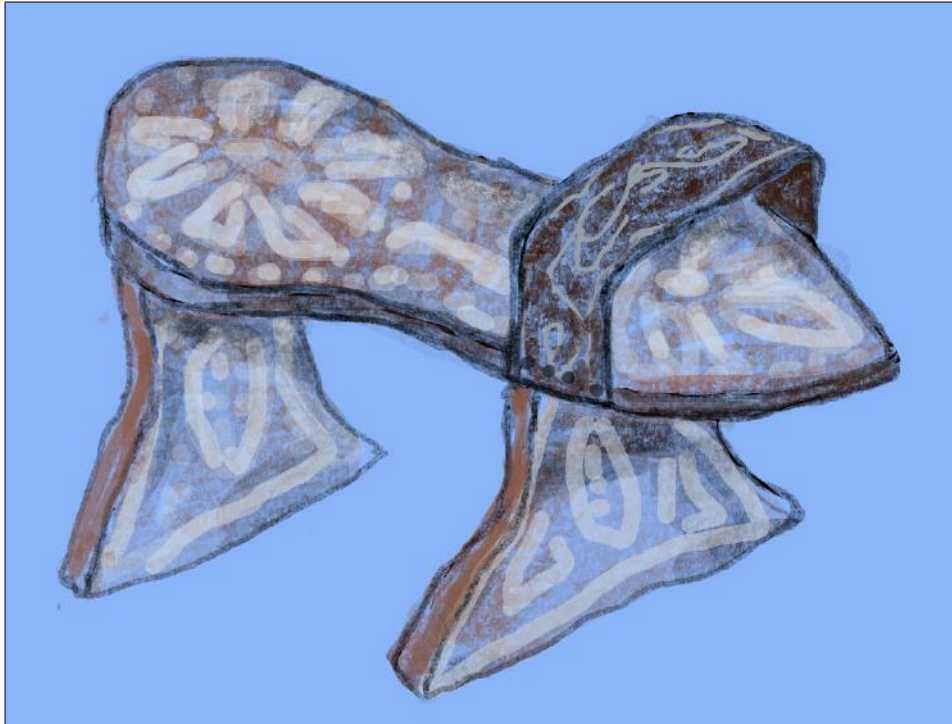
Indian paduka have solid toe posts between the big toe and the next. They may or may not have raised stilts. These stilts may be straight (as in the picture above), or they might curve to follow the shape of the sole. They range from plain to works of art, and have both practical and devotional purposes: like all wooden soled shoes they protect the feet and raise the wearer out of the dirt, but the stilted variety also minimises contact with the ground. For those wearers following a strict Hindu or Jain practice of non harm, this reduces the chances of crushing living creatures underfoot. They may also serve as an icon of a deity such as Lakshmi, or represent the Buddha. Turkish nalin appear quite like paduka in some respects, and the two styles must have influenced each other.



Nalin with stilts, inlaid with silver wire and carved mother of pearl. Note the stilts at the back, which have evolved into heels. Older nalin have identical straight stilts front and rear.

Turkish nalin, also known as bath house clogs or qab qab (from the noise they made) started life as strictly practical items. The bath houses were communal, and the raised soles kept the wearer's feet out of other people's water splashes. They became a status symbol, gorgeously decorated ~ and the higher the platform, the higher the wearer's social position, too. Nalin may or may not have a pair of stilts (and these stilts are straight, not curved as some paduka and khrawan) but the more recent will have a stilt in front with a matching heel at the back. The most basic modern nalin, takunya, have thick wooden soles, with no stilts at all, just a thick, flat sole with a slight arch and heel. Nalin do not have toe posts, and are held on by a straight band across the top of the ball of the foot, like Scholl sandals, in fact. Some decoration has a close resemblance to that found on paduka, being inlay of shell, ivory or bone, and the platform shape can be very similar to paduka as well.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Nalin with identical high stilts.



A pair of miniature nalin with elaborate wire decoration. The rear "stilts" are very clearly just ordinary heels here.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



A pair of very basic modern takunya nalin, without stilts, designed to be comfortable, practical and hygienic. The straps have been made from car tyres, and the decoration is burnt on.



Sophisticatedly simple geta.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

Japanese geta are different again. They have a v shaped strap, often made of beautiful, luxurious cloth such as silk or velvet. It forms a fabric toe post at the point between big toe and next, and reaches back, anchored to the sole on each side. This holds the shoe on securely. Many have stilts (these are straight, and set further back than paduka or nalin) known as teeth, but sometimes the soles are solid; these are called maiko. Those for little girls may have bells attached or hidden inside. The pair shown above are of elegantly plain wood with a pleasing grain, but they are often elaborately lacquered.

We often see these three styles confused, but actually, they are very distinctive. Wooden toe post ~ paduka. Broad single strap ~ nalin. V shaped fabric strap ~ geta. Unfortunately, it's not quite that simple with paduka and nalin. Paduka~type styles are mainly thought of as Indian, but in fact are spread in variants over a large part of Asia including Tibet, and through Arabia and into Africa. They blur into one another, do not follow national boundaries tidily, and often the only way of identifying them with any certainty is to have unimpeachable provenance ~ which is rare, once they are second hand. They do have some trends, though. Khrawan in Pakistan and Afghanistan are very close to paduka with regards to the sole and stilts, but rather than a solid toe post, they have leather or rope ankle straps in the form of a loop (not to be confused with geta straps which are fixed to the sides of the sole). They have an extra strap securing the sole round the instep. The African variants have solid toe posts, might include some sort of strap as well, and usually no stilts. It has to be said that wearing stilted paduka type shoes must require practice, good balance and presumably very active toes, and will result in strong feet and ankles, particularly when no straps are deployed.

Nalin and paduka are obviously related as the style of decoration and platform show, but both are very old forms of footwear, and this will have been an extended and probably reciprocal process. It is unlikely that the exact history of it can ever be sorted out. Nalin were worn across the Ottoman empire (we have a pair from Damascus in Syria) which included North Africa. Geographically it is easy to see how nalin and paduka would influence each other accounting for any similarities, however, both their purpose and the means of retaining them on the foot is quite different. Happily, geta are geta, and on their own; there is no excuse for muddle here at least.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



East African wooden sandals. The raffia is merely part of their “packaging”, keeping them together and allowing them to be hung up when they were on sale ~ it would be removed before wearing.



Khrawan with curved stilts, from Afghanistan or Pakistan. Very similar to Indian paduka in shape and decoration, but with straps rather than solid toe posts. This pair has ankle loops only – they have lost their instep straps, which would have been loose rather than affixed. It

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

cannot be seen in this photo, but one of them has suffered a snapped toe piece and the wearer has improvised with plaited fabric.

With regard to the Far East other than Japan, single strap wooden soled sandals, including red wedding clogs, terompah and bakya, can be found in China, Malaysia and the Philippines ~ these are identical in form to some Western fashion sandals, and as they are very attractive are not infrequently worn as such. (Philippines iconic bakya sandals with their charming 3D carved heels were sometimes brought back to the UK as souvenirs in WW2, and were no doubt very gratefully received at home, where pretty footwear was in short supply because of rationing). These Asian sandals sometimes get mistaken for the flatter type of nalin, and vice versa. Both are examples of a similar practical and comfortable style, but they've evolved separately. Differing decorations and the shapes of the strap and sole help identify them.



Child's bakya dating from the 1940s or '50s. The heel scene is in low relief, but usually they are fully carved. The strap is wide and shaped, fitting the foot nearly to the toes. Nalin have a narrower, straight band.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Modern Greek stilted sandals similar to nalin. The soles closely resemble early medieval pattens.

Back in Europe again, sandals almost identical to bath house clogs are still found in Greece. Of course many modern fashion sandals are also similar, though they may not have been directly influenced by nalin as the strapped sandal is a very useful and therefore ubiquitous style, as witnessed by the traditional Asian forms, too. Historically, pattens similar to nalin, though for outdoors, were worn all over Europe including Britain from early medieval times onwards. These had the very practical purposes of protecting valuable but less hard-wearing indoor shoes from the rough stones and filth of the streets, and helping to stop the dirt from being trodden indoors. Unlike the fixed strap nalin they had two part straps with ties so that they could be adjusted over the wearer's shoes. They are clearly depicted in contemporary paintings so that we can make accurate reproductions. Later on the more expensive indoor shoes had their own beautifully made matching pattens with cork soles, a world away from the cruder wooden variety.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Reproduction early medieval pattens. Some had three stilts.



Reproduction later medieval pattens - the soles have changed shape and lost their stilts.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Much later English patten with a ring and toe. Interestingly, the straps for the ties are of different leather from the toe, bearing a faint stamped pattern not visible in this photo, and are probably French. It is known that patten straps were imported to the UK. French clogs were frequently fitted with embossed straps, probably the customer's choice from a selection of ready made designs bought in by the sabot maker. Presumably English cloggers found them convenient for their own pattens.



French pattens for a child. Note the embossed straps. These have nailed on leather caulks.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

Variations on the plain wooden patten were worn in Britain right up to the early 20th century, but we tend to associate them most with the Georgian period. These post medieval versions had iron rings instead of wooden stilts, which gave them several advantages. They were far more durable, easier to keep clean, and didn't get trapped by suction, as anyone who's ever shed a shoe in deep mud will appreciate. It is likely that it was these rings which evolved into the horseshoe~style irons which protected the later clogs, and which were then copied in a rubber form, variously called rubbers, caulkers, or oddly, rubber irons. In time some developed partial leather toes and were the probable ancestor to full leather-uppered clogs such as galoches and Lancashire clogs.



Antique miniature pattens with toes, and metal welts. They have no sole protection. These could be French or English, but they are one of two pairs bought in the UK.

Miniature clogs were (and are) frequently made for fun, as pleasant nostalgic keepsakes or curiosities showing off the clogger's skill, profitably using up scraps of materials. Despite frequent claims on eBay and the like, they are not sales samples, and nor are the child-sized versions, which are simply what they look like: clogs made for children. Itinerant clog salespersons did not go round the country touting improbable models of their wares in suitcases - cloggers had shops. Nor were these miniatures apprentice pieces to be assessed and passed before achieving journeyman status; we're talking well-made but inexpensive working class shoes here, not Chippendale furniture. Apprentice cloggers would have made

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

full sized versions at full sized prices, though it is possible they might have made miniatures for pocket money as well.



Reproduction medieval patten next to a Georgian style (but later) patten with an iron patten ring. The rings could be much higher than this example, sometimes a foot or more. The two part straps with laces allowed for variations in shoes; they'd fit over anything from slippers to boots.

Going back to ancient times there's even a surviving example of a wooden bath house clog worn in Roman Vindolanda, Northumberland, which has been preserved in anaerobic conditions. I believe the probability is that humans have been making wooden shoes as far back as we've been capable of a sufficient degree of craftsmanship, and that is likely to be much longer than we might think, way back into prehistory. We talk about the Stone Age because it's mostly only the worked stones which have survived from this period, but in reality, the predominant craft material must have been wood - as indeed it has been through all ages until very recently, when plastics became common. Unfortunately, wood almost always rots, but enough survives to show that humans have been skilled woodworkers for a very, very long time. We will never know when wooden soles first appeared, but I would not be surprised if it was quite early on in our history.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

I think it is most likely that clogs began with tie-on sandal types as they are the simplest to make, and then evolved into the full shoe which can be made of wood alone, or a combination of wood and leather.

The fully or mostly wooden model is found independently in both Europe and the far east: the iconic Dutch klompen with variants all over Europe, and in Asia, less familiar examples such as Korean namakshin and Japanese asagutso. Some of these types had flat soles, some came with stilts, some had varying quantities of leather incorporated in the uppers, but they are all substantially made from wood which has been hollowed out.



Two examples of namakshin, practical and ornamental. The stilts are carved out of the solid block, not attached as are geta teeth.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



A selection of Spanish pile clogs, the two smaller are ornamental miniatures. The practical version was worn with very thick socks, or even stuffed with hay or wool for comfort. This pair has thick recycled tyre rubbers. Some Spanish clogs were carved in their entirety (as shown here) from a solid block, others had their stilts extended with wooden pegs.



Spanish clogs with stilts attached with dowels.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



French sabots with a wide, embossed strap. These straps would have been bought by the sabot maker ready-made.



Typical German clog with a strap which is in effect a partial upper of padded leather. This gives more leeway to the tarsals and metatarsals than a full wooden clog, so that the clog can fit higher up the foot.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Belgian clogs with leather straps for security. These would not accidentally fly off the foot at awkward moments.



French boot sabots with very substantial leather tops and only a partial wooden upper over the toes.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

Interestingly, the klompen sort was known in Britain but never became popular. Here entirely leather-uppered clogs were and are the norm, it is believed evolving from the strapped pattens which had gradually acquired leather toes as well. (There is no contemporary evidence to support the absurd myth that British clogs evolved from sabots brought by Flemish weavers. We know that wooden soled footwear was already in use here from a much earlier date anyway, and that both the influx and influence of continental immigrants in all sorts of fields is much less widespread than some would imagine: much was made up out of the whole cloth - if you will pardon the pun - in Victorian times, centuries after the events. In terms of sabot making, the many tools required are specialist, very bulky and heavy. I seriously doubt migrant weavers would burden themselves with clog making equipment, they'd have more than enough with their own appurtenances and personal gear).

There could be several reasons for this British disfavour for the otherwise useful sabot type of shoe. Solid clogs require more wood and are easily spoiled during construction. Wood was (and remains) a limited resource in our small island, expensive, and not to be wasted. Soles require less complicated work to construct and fewer specialist tools, the gougers, scoops, scrapers, and giant augers needed to carve out klompen being unnecessary. However, even though the advent of copying lathes eventually allowed for the easy mass production of sabots, all-wooden clogs still did not catch on in Britain. There are other factors. Leather clogs are neater, more versatile (for example, elaborate step dancing is simply not possible in bulky sabots or klompen) and are kinder to wear, adapting to the wearer's idiosyncrasies. Unlike sabots, all parts of leather clogs can be mended or replaced, a further economy on top of the saving in wood.

A pair of women's work clogs from Lancashire, clearly showing bunions which would have been agony in solid wooden clogs, but here the leather has been stretched (either by wear or design) to accommodate them comfortably. The toes have been patched - this pattern of wear is caused by scrubbing stone floors on hands and knees - and new straps have been fitted, again in this position an area of strain. Clogs are easily repaired and very economical. The mends on this pair are not elegant, but would have kept them serviceable - maybe their owner appreciated they were easy on her bunions, so they were worth the trouble of fixing.

[Following page]

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Leather upper clogs can be worn with ordinary thin socks or even without socks at all, and stay safely in place even with vigorous movement. Solid wooden clogs are unyielding so need thick socks, felt or leather slippers, or straw or wool padding for comfort. They also have a disconcerting tendency to fly off the foot, though some include leather straps to prevent such accidents. Interestingly, few examples of antique working klompen or sabots survive. Most couldn't be mended (though we do have one pair which have had the worn sides of the soles built up again with roughly nailed lino), and being made completely of wood, once too decrepit to wear their final apotheosis was as fuel - they'd be chunked on the fire.

We tend to think of clogs with all leather uppers as British, and primarily from Lancashire. However, although they were indeed very popular in Lancashire and have lingered longer in everyday use in that county, they were commonly found all over the UK and also appear in Ireland and on mainland Europe. Again this causes confusion, as although there are stylistic differences, these can be very subtle and are by no means fixed.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

British and Irish clogs utilised a variety of sole protection. The familiar irons of "sparking" clogs possibly evolved from the Georgian patten ring, if influenced by actual horseshoes which they strongly resemble. Soles were occasionally covered with leather, though this does not seem very practical as it would rapidly wear out. We have a child's pair with irons nailed over leather, though most of this has been scraped off in use, and another with leather held in place with brass nails - though old, this pair does not appear to have been worn. "Rubber irons" became popular, being quieter and less slippery. At first these were purpose made, moulded to size and shape by firms such as Redferns. Circular revolving heels (fastened in the centre by a single screw) were very economical, particularly for those with pronating feet causing uneven wear. They could be loosened and rotated to a sound area, so lasting much longer. Eventually preformed rubbers went out of production, and now cloggers cut their own from sheeting, or occasionally use boot soles.

They are less well known, but several European countries had and have very similar wooden soled, lace up leather topped clogs, and the "furniture" which came with them can be similar, too, though so far I have not seen any European clogs with the hook together clasps which were popular in Britain until laces and buckles became the norm. Hobnails are usually found on Continental clogs, and irons mostly on British and Irish, but this is not a hard and fast rule. Solid klompen-style continental clogs were mainly left with the soles bare (hobnails were occasionally employed, and sometimes rubbers in France), but those with leather uppers usually had some form of protection: rubbers, sometimes hobnails, or rarely, irons. These were fitted at point of purchase to the buyer's choice. Though unshod vintage galoches often appear on sales sites, it is evident that these are old unsold stock in pristine pre-sale condition - they were not normally worn with bare soles, as used examples show, though as ever, to confuse matters there are exceptions. Their British and Irish counterparts were inevitably shod with iron, rubber, or occasionally leather caulkers (barring step dancing clogs); though in cases of extreme poverty worn out irons might not get replaced.

The fact that continental sabot types were (and are) only rarely shod seems odd, bearing in mind it would extend the life of the shoe and sole protection is already used on galoché types, so readily available. It could be another instance where the relative costs of materials may be a factor. The expense of fitting irons or rubbers is unquestionably justified by the saving in wood over here, but on the continent with cheap and cheerful wood, it might be the case that the iron and leather, being the more valuable resources, were only used together rather than the iron wasted on wood alone. Pass. Fashion and habit probably come into it as well.

Leather clogs are economical and environmentally friendly in proper use. All the parts can be individually replaced, and care will extend life for decades. As long as they are not allowed to wear right through, irons and rubbers preserve the soles efficiently. The nail holes left by this may be filled with match sticks or purpose made pegs, or a new sole fitted if the old sole

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

splits or has been re-shod too many times. We have some beautifully made and clearly much valued step dancing clogs where the soles have had new bits of wood expertly pieced in. As clogs do not bend, unlike shoes their leather doesn't crease or crack. "Hands and knees" wear will damage the uppers at the toes, but these can be patched. If the leather is not repairable but the soles are still good, replacement uppers may be fitted. Some cloggers reused the reclaimed uppers from boots whose soles were past mending.



A pair of Victorian child's clogs, showing the results of extreme poverty. These will have been hand-me-downs to several children. The uppers have been slit to try to accommodate growing feet, and the irons have completely worn away. The soles are paper thin to the point of being through at the toes. Much of the damage could have been avoided by replacing the irons - but though this would have greatly extended their useful life, it cost too much.

Nowadays we associate leather slip on clogs largely with the Scandinavian countries. These northern styles are popularly backless, though there are a few with a full foot.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Child's Scandinavian clogs from Denmark, with a full back.

The French also had several varieties of slip-ons, some backless, some full foot, varying from sturdy plain workaday to elegantly carved with fancy cut out lacquered leather uppers.



French wartime galoches in very solid leather with a full back, and leather caulkers reinforced with hobnails - these meant business.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

There is a Portuguese version with a characteristic slit at the heel. These often have punched decorations similar to those used by UK cloggers.



A modern pair of traditional Portuguese slip-on clogs. These have welts, and the edges of the leather have been neatly bound.



A pair of Welsh slipper clogs.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

"Slipper clogs" with a very low vamp allowing them to be easily pushed on or kicked off are an uncommon variant in the UK, popular for a time in Wales. Some slipper clogs had clasps, but these were not really necessary, as they were intended for quick and trouble-free use without the bother of fastening and unfastening. Others were decorated with buttons.



Modern Spanish Zuecos de Gallegos in undyed leather with car tyre rubbers. Very similar boot clogs are found in Portugal.

Spanish zuecos are confusingly like UK clogs in many respects. They are more often found in undyed or tan leather, so if I had a vintage or antique pair of light coloured boot clogs which were clearly not French I might assign them as Spanish or maybe Portuguese. However, modern British cloggers use all colours of leather, so that's no longer an entirely reliable criterion. Other than that, I suspect there's no substitute for simply knowing their provenance, as our pairs have confused knowledgeable English clogmakers.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Stylish French boot galoches with a pronounced curve at the heel, lacquered toes and faux snakeskin. Note hidden nails.

French galoches often have a distinct style to them, and are easily recognisable, with flatter soles, a swan neck curve in the leather over the heel and up the achilles if they reach that far (other continental and UK clogs were generally straighter in the back), and the nail heads often skilfully hidden with resin or wax so that they looked more like ordinary boots. Rubbers are found on the continent too (though to add to the confusion, were sometimes imported from Britain, and sometimes made on the continent to the British pattern by licence), some with an ingenious zig zag design which allowed a continuous strip to be fitted easily round a curved shape of any size, so that it was not necessary to waste materials cutting sheets out into the traditional “irons” shape.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



Black lacquered slip-on galoches with partial wooden heel backs, embossed decoration and zig zag rubbers.



Plain pair of French galoches which apart from the sole shape bear a strong resemblance to their British and Spanish counterparts - these have visible nails, straighter heel backs than

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

usual, and tins (not usually found on Spanish zuecos), though these are a slightly different shape from British tins and have a horizontal indent across them.

Tins, the stylized toe plates which afford some protection from wear caused by knocks, also appear on French clogs, though less frequently than on British. Some continental clogs have leather welts, but wire was occasionally used in France.

German boot clogs which fastened with straps and buckles were known as Baltic clogs. Often worn by seafarers as well as those in messy trades such as gardening, these were imported to Britain on a large scale until the design was copied and they were made locally instead - and during the First World War they discreetly lost the "Baltic" tag and became simply two-buckled clogs. Colour can be some indication. Older British clogs are mostly black, whereas brown leather was used more in Europe - but again, this is a tendency rather than a rule.



An unusual pair of black galoches - however, there's no confusion, as the design screams "France"!

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

There is further potential for muddle in that there is evidence that British clogs were occasionally exported to Europe as well as vice versa. Even some klompen types have been imported to the UK, mostly casually by individuals, as commercially they were not a success. In these instances, decoration is the safest giveaway. We've seen pictures of a pair of all-wooden sabot type clogs which were indisputably worn on a farm in the Shetlands. The decorative style, however, places their origin very firmly in the Netherlands ~ they are true klompen, not locally made. Somebody put their souvenirs to practical use, and why not? Klompen were made to plodge safely through the mud and be kicked off at the back door leaving the inner slippers comfortably clean for indoors: ideal wear on a farm.

So it is easy to see why there's confusion about the styles and origins of wooden shoes. All I can say is, do some research, don't necessarily swallow the first explanation you see (even in a museum), and use a bit of common sense. Don't trust vendors' information on sales websites. They are frequently way off.

I've not discussed it at length here, but they may also grossly overestimate age, too, as they've a vested interest in selling antiques. Many "Victorian" clogs we see advertised are mid or even late 20th century, just battered and tatty rather than genuinely old.



A modern morris clog with battered leather and severe damage caused by ignoring a worn away iron. It may look ancient, but this is the result of hard use, carelessness and lack of polish, not antiquity. Don't assume that because clogs look shabby, they are necessarily old. Many old clogs have been looked after and are still handsome and wearable. Note the very flat, machined sole here.

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes

Pay attention to hand carved v. machined soles (bear in mind machined soles can be hand finished, and hand carved soles are still made), hand stitching vs machine, the cut, type, and finish of the leather, and no, a pair with rubbers are not Georgian, or even Victorian. In fact, Georgian clogs survive only as pattens (and even these are rare) - we don't find them with full uppers until later. Old style clogs have uppers miraculously shaped to the foot with the minimum of sewing (sometimes as little as four stitches per clog), but this wasted a lot of leather. Once machines took over the drudgery of sewing, more and longer seams allowed the leather to be pieced economically. A machine sewn pair obviously cannot be early, but unfortunately for identification purposes, though machined clogs did become the norm in due course, hand sewn clogs could be made in stouter leather which was preferable in some circumstances, also they are nostalgic and look good, so old fashioned styles continued to be made throughout - and modern cloggers are still perfectly capable of crafting them. The rule of thumb is, hand made does not necessarily guarantee antiquity, but machining excludes it. Look at the shape of the soles. Are they duck toed or narrow (may be older, though the styles have persisted on request) or round (probably modern)? Are the clogs very deep and narrow in the midfoot (old), or broad, with a shallower, more natural shape (modern)? Do they have a pronounced toe spring or roll (possibly old, though this style is coming back as it's easier to walk in, quieter, and a lot more comfortable), or are they flatter (modern)? Very old clogs were not differentiated, so if the soles show as left and right, they're more recent (don't look at the uppers, in the old clogs these did wear to fit the correct feet eventually, so can be confusing). Laces come later, fair enough, but cloggers carried on using (and still use) old stocks of clasps and buttons.

Clogs & Pattens Of Britain & Ireland

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About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



A pair of child-sized dandy clogs, old, but unworn. One of the clasps is in effect upside down.

They have identical soles and never having conformed to right and left feet, the uppers haven't differentiated - the infuriating result of which is that no matter how they are placed for photography, they always look wrong. Of course, this is not a foolproof way of dating clogs from someone else's photo, as they may genuinely have got them the wrong way round!

About Clogs and Wooden Shoes



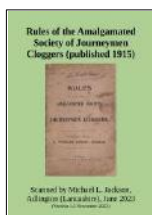
A selection of children's clogs, top to bottom Victorian to late 1990s, clearly showing the evolution in shape. It has to be admitted that the earlier clogs look elegant, but they must have squashed up the poor little soft footbones dreadfully.

To further confound matters, many vendors do not even understand the way dating works, so that anything from the 1800s (and very likely not that old in any case) may be described as eighteenth century. Quite what century these people think they are living in *now* escapes me.

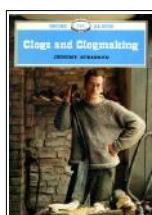
In the end, there is no substitute for looking at (and preferably handling) as many styles and ages of clog as possible. Like birds, clogs have their own jizz, and recognising this comes in time.

Further Reading

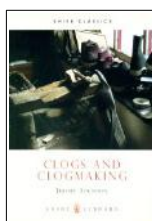
(English language titles only)



Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Cloggers, *Rules*, Oldham, 1915. Journeymen Cloggers were the employees of Master Cloggers, and their Amalgamated Society was equivalent to a trade union. Free download from the Internet Archive [here](#).



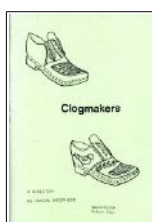
Atkinson, Jeremy *Clogs and Clogmaking*, Aylesbury, 1984. Written by an active clog maker, who specialises in making clog soles the traditional way, with cloggers' knives. Well-illustrated with black and white photographs, it includes a brief list of other clog makers.



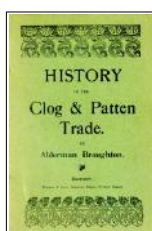
Atkinson, Jeremy *Clogs and Clogmaking*, Botley, 2008. Republished by Shire Books, the 2008 edition no longer includes the list of other clog makers, but there is a list of museums to visit which have collections relevant to clog making.



Broomhead, Duncan, *Clogmakers – A Directory*, Manchester, March 1983. A directory of British clog makers identified as being active in the early 1980s, together with some no longer in the trade but who were known within recent memory. Useful illustrations of clog crimps (patterns in the leather uppers). Free download [here](#).



Broomhead, Duncan, *Clogmakers – A Directory*, Manchester, May 1983. An updated edition of the directory with additional illustrations. Both editions are available free of charge as PDF documents. Free download from the Internet Archive [here](#).



Broughton, Alderman Thomas, *History of the Clog & Patten Trade* Accrington, c1899. Includes an essay by clogger James Butterworth of Manchester. Broughton's booklet endorsed the Flemish weavers origins myth. It includes advertisements for businesses involved in the clog trade, including suppliers of clog blocks, leather, clasps, irons and tools.



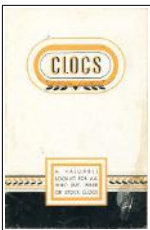
Butterworth, Philip, Thomas Lamb, Master Clogger and George Childs, *Journeyman Clogger: The Last Cloggers in Oldham, Part I*, Tools and Trades History Society, 2022. The author interviewed Thomas Lamb in the mid-1960s. In this part he explains how clogs were made and includes illustrations of the tools used.



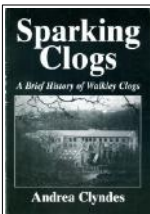
Butterworth, Philip, Thomas Lamb, Master Clogger and George Childs, *Journeyman Clogger: The Last Cloggers in Oldham, Part II*, Tools and Trades History Society, 2023. In this part the author looks at George Childs. It is illustrated with photographs of Childs making clogs, and has pictures of tools and different styles of clogs.



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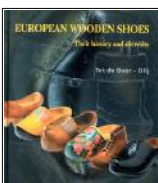
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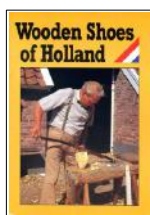
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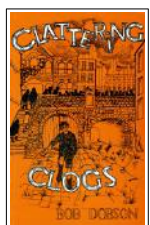
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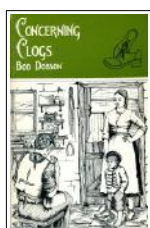
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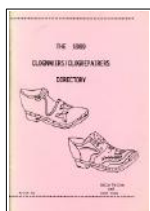
Dobson, Bob, *Clattering Clogs*, Blackpool, 1981. An informative and entertaining book, illustrated with black and white photographs. Includes lists of clog dance teachers and clog makers current at the time of publication.



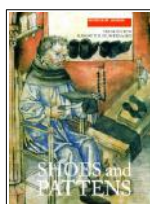
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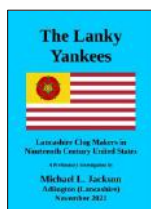


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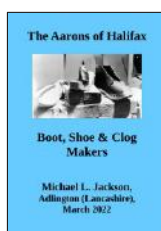
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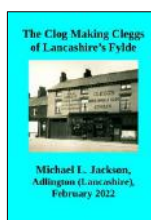
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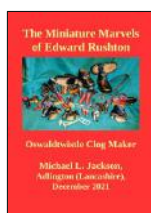
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Jackson, Michael L., *The Cleggs – A Lancashire Clog Making Dynasty*, The Lancastrian, Friends of Real Lancashire, 2022. A short history of the Cleggs, who made clogs in several Lancashire towns and villages, Ireland, and possibly in Utah (United States of America.)



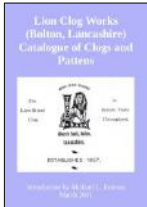
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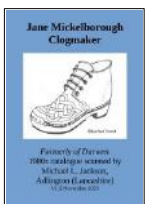
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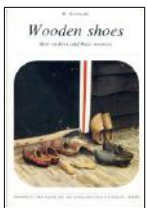
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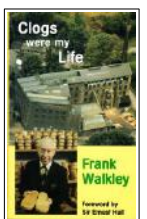
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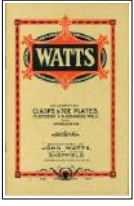
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Williams, Launcelot, *The Old Art of Clogging (Lancashire Life article)*, Manchester, 1953. A short article about the display of clogger's tools in the Castle Museum, York, and an explanation of how clogs were made entirely by hand, largely a lost art by the 1950s.

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- c1899 **Broughton, Alderman Thomas**, *History of the Clog & Patten Trade* Accrington.
- 1915 **Amalgamated Society of Journeymen Cloggers**, *Rules*, Oldham.
- c1920 **Watts, John**, *Celebrated Clasps & Toe Plates, Cloggers' & Shoemakers' Tools and Accessories*, Sheffield.
- 1940 **Sommerfield, Adolf**, *History of footwear with wooden soles*, Berlin.
- 1950s **Clog Publicity Association**, *Clogs*, Hebden Bridge.
- 1953 **Williams, Launcelot**, *The Old Art of Clogging (Lancashire Life article)*, Manchester.
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- 1977 **Vigeon, Evelyn**, *Clogs or Wooden Soled Shoes*, Journal of the Costume Society.
- 1978 **Noorlander, H.**, *Wooden shoes – their makers and their wearers*, Arnhem.
- 1979 **Dobson, Bob**, *Concerning Clogs*, Clapham (Yorkshire).
- 1980s **Mickelborough, Jane**, *Clog Catalogue*, Darwen (Lancashire).
- 1981 **Dobson, Bob**, *Clattering Clogs*, Blackpool.
- 1983 **Broomhead, Duncan**, *Clogmakers – A Directory*, Manchester.

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- 1989 **Fallon, Sally and Lepp, Jane**, *The 1989 Clogmakers/Clogrepairers Directory*, Cheshire.
- 1993 **Dobson, Bob**, *Concerning Clogs*, Blackpool.
- 1997 **Clyndes, Andrea**, *Sparking Clogs – A Brief History of Walkley Clogs*, Todmorden.
- 1997 **Hartley, Marie and Ingilby, Joan**, *Making Boots, Shoes & Clogs*, Otley.
- 1998 **Walkley, Frank**, *Clogs Were My Life*, Lewes.
- 2002 **de Boer, Tet**, *European Wooden Shoes – Their history and diversity*, The Netherlands.
- 2006 **Grew, Francis and de Neergaard Margrethe**, *Shoes and Pattens*, Woodbridge.
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- 2021 **Jackson, Michael L.**, *Lanky Yankees*, Adlington (Lancashire).
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- 2022 **Jackson, Michael L.**, *The Clog Making Cleggs of Lancashire's Fylde*, Adlington (Lancashire).
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- 2022 **Jackson, Michael L.**, *The Aarons of Halifax – Boot, Shoe & Clog Makers*, Adlington (Lancashire).
- 2022 **Butterworth, Philip**, *Thomas Lamb, Master Clogger and George Childs, Journeyman Clogger: The Last Cloggers in Oldham, Part I*, Tools and Trades History Society.

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- 2023 **Butterworth, Philip**, *Thomas Lamb, Master Clogger and George Childs, Journeyman Clogger: The Last Cloggers in Oldham, Part II*, Tools and Trades History Society.
- 2023 **Butterworth, Philip**, *Thomas Lamb, Master Clogger and George Childs, Journeyman Clogger: The Last Cloggers in Oldham, Part III*, Tools and Trades History Society.

Undated

Colne Valley Museum, *The Clog Maker*, Golcar, possibly 1990s.

Dendermonde, Max and Scholten, Herman, *Wooden Shoes of Holland*, The Netherlands.

Availability of free PDF editions

A number of the publications are either out of copyright, or their authors have given permission for them to be distributed as free PDFs. Such titles plus those written by Michael L. Jackson have been uploaded to the Internet Archive and are available for reading online or as free downloads. Some titles have also been made available in Facebook groups, but only for downloading by group members.

Additional information about clogs, pattens, and wooden shoes may be found on the following Facebook pages:

[Clogs & Pattens of Britain & Ireland](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes](#)

Links to Google Photos albums of photographs of clogs, pattens, wooden shoes, tools, postcards, souvenirs, etc. may be found on the following Pinterest boards created by Michael L. Jackson:

[UK Clogs](#)

[Pattens & Patten Rings](#)

[Clasp Clogs](#)

[Boot Clogs \(all styles\)](#)

[Boot Clogs \(lace-up\)](#)

[Boot Clogs \(flap & buckle\)](#)

[Baltic Clogs \(1, 2 or 3 buckle versions\)](#)

[Over-Clogs](#)

[One-bar Clogs \(buttons & buckles\)](#)

[Shoe Clogs \(with laces\)](#)

[Shoe Clogs \(with buckles\)](#)

[Fancy / Dandy Clogs](#)

[Step Dancing Clogs](#)

[North West Morris Dancing Clogs](#)

[War-time Clogs & Wooden Shoes](#)

[Slipper Clogs & Slip-on Clogs](#)

[Ankle-strap Clogs](#)

[Clogs with unusual uppers](#)

[Children's Clogs and Wooden Shoes](#)

[Miniature Clogs & Pattens](#)

[Clog Making & Repairing Components & Tools](#)

[Clog & Wooden Shoe Ornaments & Souvenirs](#)

[Clog & Wooden Shoe Badges & Brooches](#)

[Dolls & Toy Animals in Clogs & Wooden Shoes](#)

[Clog-related Records](#)

[Museum Clog Collections](#)

[Clog Postcards: Clog & Wooden Shoe Makers](#)

[Clog Postcards: Ordinary People](#)

[Clog Postcards: Performers \(Dancers & Actors\)](#)

[Clog Postcards: People in Costumes](#)

[Clog Postcards: Places](#)

[Clog Postcards: Holiday Wind-ups](#)

[Making Clogs & Wooden Shoes \(Videos\)](#)

[Clog-related Documents](#)

[Books: Clogs & Clogmaking](#)

[Books: Clog Dancing & Clog Dancers](#)

[Riggs of Hawkshead](#)

[Clogs and Beer](#)

[Historic Lancashire](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Mainly Wood](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Patten-like Shoes](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Boots & Shoes](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Slip-ons](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - German Shoes 1930s](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - French Shoes 1942](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Souvenirs etc.](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Making & Repairing](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Books](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Postcards & Beermats](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Dutch Postcards](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Documents](#)

[World Clogs & Wooden Shoes - Other People's Pins](#)

[Books: European Wooden Shoes \(Sabots & klompen\)](#)

More boards relevant to clogs and wooden shoes may be added in future. Check the following Pinterest board:

[Michael L. Jackson's Pinterest Boards](#)